



Beshalach – Leave the Sea Behind

Rabbi Shmuel Silber

Dedicated in memory of Fraida bas Moshe Yosef z'l by her loving family

Moses led Israel away from the Red Sea, and they went out into the desert of Shur; they walked for three days in the desert but did not find water.” (Exodus 15:22)

The Jewish people had seen miracle after miracle. The plagues and the splitting of the sea had culminated in the singing of the jubilant *shira* (song), *Az Yashir*. But now, it was time to travel forward and embrace destiny. It was time to journey to Mount Sinai, receive the Torah, and solidify our identity as the nation of God. Moshe told the people to ready themselves for the journey ahead, but they didn't want to leave the banks of the Red Sea. The verse states, *VaYasa Moshe es Ha'Am mi'yam suf, Moshe led Israel away from the Red Sea*, and Rashi comments: **“Moses led Israel away: lit., made Israel journey. He led them away against their will, for the Egyptians had adorned their steeds with ornaments of gold, silver, and precious stones, and the Israelites were finding them in the sea”**.

Rav Zalman Sorotzkin (1881-1966) in his work titled, *Oznayim LaTorah* provides an incredible insight. With the crossing of the sea, the Jewish nation was catapulted to the heights of prophecy. They were able to see and perceive God in ways unimaginable to us. They sang with Moshe; they sang with Miriam and with each song felt closer and more connected to God. When Moshe told them it was time to leave, they responded with one simple question, *“why?” Why would we leave this place of incredible holiness? It is here that we have experienced and connected with the Divine. Is this not the promised land? Is this not what we aspire to? Why would we want to be anywhere else but here? You have told us about Mount Sinai and the Land of Israel, but all we need spiritually and materially is right here. We feel no need to journey any further.* And it was in this moment that Moshe taught the people an incredible lesson. There are times in life when you must leave that which is comfortable and known for the opportunity to seize an even greater destiny. The banks of the Red Sea are wonderful, but there is something even better. But in order to seize it, you will have to travel into the desert of the unknown, give up your security and comfort, and strike out into the wilderness. It appears that the people were unmoved by Moshe's argument, and so *VaYasa Moshe es Ha'Am, Moshe forcibly moved the people.*

There are times in life when we find ourselves at our personal Red Sea. I find a spot in life which is comfortable, predictable, and secure. I settle on the banks of my life river, and I feel good. It is a good spot spiritually and materially, and I feel like I can dwell here for a long time. After all, what we crave most in life is predictability and security. But in those moments, when we want to settle on the banks of our *Yam Suf*, the voice of Moshe whispers in our ears, *“it's time to move, it's time to break camp, it's time to travel to Mount Sinai.”* In those moments in life when we get to ready to settle down and “coast”, we must push ourselves to do more and be more. In those moments when we happily reflect on our accomplishments, we must ask ourselves, *“what's next?”* Real growth only occurs when you are willing to leave your comfort zone and strike out into the unknown. May we find the courage to leave the banks of the Red Sea, venture into the desert, find meaning at Mount Sinai, and continue travelling to our promised land.